

Better Homes and Centers



Michigan Department of
Social Services

Parent Involvement

Issue 24 Spring 1990

ARE YOU GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT?

By Tina Marks

Family Day Care Home Consultant, Wayne County

I remember vividly my first experience with day care. My son was five months old and I was enjoying watching him change daily as he became aware of his surroundings. He would look right into my mouth as I talked or sang to him. He smiled and tried to make similar sounds in response. His morning bath was a fun time as he would kick his feet and laugh while splashing water from his bathtub all over me and the floor.

All too soon it was time for me to return to work. I was plagued by anxiety attacks and feelings of guilt over leaving my baby with a stranger. Among the thoughts going through my mind were: Would he eat for her? Would she know when he was ready for his nap? Would she talk and sing to him? Would she change his diapers often enough? Would he feel I had abandoned him?

A day care provider was referred to me by a friend. During our initial interview I learned she had two children in care and their ages. I was taken through the home and shown where my son would spend most of his time and where he would sleep. The provider was a warm, friendly person who assured me she would take good care of my son. I felt very comfortable with her as she responded to the needs of the children in her care while talking with me. She also asked numerous questions about my son in an attempt to learn about his personality and his schedule. This also made me feel more at ease.

The morning I returned to work was a painful experience. I felt guilty about getting my baby up and taking him out so early. It was also difficult leaving him with someone he was unfamiliar with. When I arrived at work I phoned the provider to find out if he was all right and if he had cried after I left. I was told he was fine. I phoned again at 10:00 a.m. and was assured he was all right. I phoned again at noon just to be sure he was eating and that there were no problems. Again I was told he was doing well. When I phoned the provider at 2:30 p.m. she told me my son was fine

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DIRECTOR'S CORNER

The Division of Child Day Care Licensing has for some time held to the belief that protecting children in day care represents a partnership between parents, providers and the department. For purposes of this newsletter, I would like to say a few words about the value and level of parent involvement as one aspect of this partnership.

Deciding the type of care to use, and what home or center best meets the needs of their children, represents one of the most important choices parents can make. Michigan's rules for child care centers and homes were developed with parents in mind. The recently promulgated family and group home rules provide for parents to make decisions regarding medical and field trip permission; to be informed when a child is ill or has an accident; and to indicate a preference as to where medical care should be obtained in an emergency. Parents have the right to visit their children in care at any time and they are to be provided copies of the provider's discipline policy and department rules so they are aware of provider practices and licensing requirements. Child care center rules provide many of the same guarantees. In addition, menus must be posted for parents to view and they must receive written policies for food services, admission/withdrawal and fees.

These rules permit parents full involvement with their children and the child day care facility. Without this connection, parents would not be able to make informed decisions that they, and they alone, must make concerning the child care arrangements.

Why is all this important? The reason is quite simple. The more secure parents are with open communication between themselves and the provider, the less anxious they are about the care their children are receiving. This translates into a positive relationship between provider and parents which helps everyone meet the needs of the individual child and ensures a smooth transition between the child's own home and the child care setting. It will also result in parents experiencing less guilt over having to place their children in care because they know they are an active part of their children's day-to-day child care experience. An added benefit for providers is that parents who feel

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BE ALL RIGHT?...

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then asked in a very pleasant and concerned tone, "Are you going to be all right?" At that time I wasn't sure. I was so guilt ridden and perhaps a little afraid someone else would take my place in his young life.

I feel very fortunate to have had such an understanding, patient and perceptive person caring for my child. Each evening she gave me a detailed description of my son's day. This included how he ate, number of naps, number and type of b.m.'s, and anything new regarding his development. (I was worried about his b.m.'s because he had milk allergies and was subject to diarrhea.) Not only did this make me feel more a part of his daily life, it also provided me with necessary information for the doctor at the time of his physicals or when he was ill.

It is important for the providers to understand how helpless and vulnerable parents may feel about leaving their child. Establishing a good base of communication with parents from the time of placement will best assure a healthy development experience for all concerned.

DIRECTOR'S CORNER...

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comfortable communicating with them will be less likely to complain to us when minor problems arise.

I invite readers to share with the editorial staff of this newsletter some of your successful parent-involvement activities. Your experiences can then be shared with other providers in future issues of *Better Homes and Centers*.



Ted deWolf, Director
Division of Child Day Care Licensing

APRIL IS... THE MONTH OF THE YOUNG CHILD

Each April, the people of the state of Michigan celebrate the Month of the Young Child by holding public information activities around the state.

Sponsored by a coalition of public and private agencies and organizations, the Month of the Young Child draws attention to the needs of children. Communities are helped to recognize the importance of children and their families through a variety of activities.

The Month of the Young Child is celebrated by Social Agencies, Government Officials, Community Organizations, Businesses, Media, Child Care Services and of course, the Children of Michigan and their families.

Look for activities in your community and help us celebrate the Month of the Young Child!



HELPING CHILDREN & PARENTS SAY GOODBYE

Saying goodbye may be a very traumatic experience for both your day care children and their parents. You, as the provider, can work with each of them to help smooth the transition.

The most important factor is to ensure the parent that he/she is leaving the child in a warm, happy, loving environment. You should greet the parent and the child warmly and cheerfully each day when they arrive.

The separation process is a very complicated one to fully understand. You may want the parent to stay with his/her child for decreasing amounts of time the first week. Your reassuring presence in this new situation for both the parent and the child is essential, particularly if:

- a baby is exhibiting anxiety toward strangers,
- a child had little experience in being cared for by others,
- a child speaks a language other than what is normally spoken in your day care home, or
- a child has had a previous traumatic separation experience.

Ask the parent to observe, rather than play with, the child. That way other children and their activities will be far more appealing to his/her own child.

At the beginning, make certain that each day when the parents arrive, they take the time to see that their child gets settled comfortably. This is no time to rush. You may want to ask parents to arrive a little early on the first day. That way the other children then can join

the already busy new child. That way is easier than expecting a new child to comfortably join a group activity already in progress when they don't know the other children.

Even if a child is intently involved when it is time for the parent to leave, do not encourage the parent to slip out unnoticed. It will violate the child's trust if they leave without saying goodbye. Be sure the child understands when their parent will return. Gauge it on something the child will understand, like "Mom will pick you up to go home after you have your afternoon snack."

Be alert to the child's needs by helping them to say goodbye to their parent and getting them involved in an interesting activity quickly. Offer comforting words to the child, such as "I know it's hard to say goodbye." Ridicule, such as "Only babies cry!" will not help the child learn how to deal constructively with this.

During the day, be ready to talk with or comfort a child. Children need to share their feelings too. Some children enjoy making paintings or other projects for their parents.

With the help of a warm and understanding provider, the transition of separation can be a relatively easy experience for both your day care child and their parent. It can also aid in the development of a well-adjusted individual.

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PARENT INVOLVEMENT: THE BRIDGE BETWEEN HOME AND DAY CARE

*By Mary Ellen Brown
Home Program Director
Eastminster Child Day Care Center*

As a working parent, it can sometimes be difficult to leave a child in day care. As a provider, it can also be difficult serving families because of all the emotional and physical energy it takes to run a quality program. One thing that can help is for parents to become involved with the day care program.

By becoming involved, parents get firsthand experience in what happens with their child in day care. It also helps parents to appreciate and understand what family day care is all about.

Parent involvement also builds solid parent-provider relationships. A simple way to put it is building a bridge between day care and home. This is the key to meaningful relationships.

SOME WAYS TO GET PARENTS INVOLVED:

1. Ask parents to help on field trips.
2. Invite parents to have breakfast, lunch or snack

with their child.

3. Plan an annual picnic with all of your families.
4. Plan a parent night to discuss policies of day care.
5. Invite parents to help celebrate special holidays or events.
6. Have an Evening with Arts (display children's artwork and invite parents and children to come and enjoy the child's art.) You could even set up a typical free play.
7. Invite parents to visit any time.

The bottom line is that the more parents get involved, the more they appreciate the provider and vice-versa. This also will help to bring consistency and security to the child in day care.

Providing quality child care can be challenging, but it is also one of the most rewarding professions.

PARENTS AND TODDLERS TOGETHER

By Nancy S. Graham

Former Teacher at Presbyterian Parent Cooperative
Preschool, Midland County

Our schedules today are busy ones. As parents, we want desperately to spend good, quality time with our children, and yet we find ourselves caught up in our hurried activities. Parent-toddler programs provide opportunities for parents to take time out. Time out to spend with toddlers, one-on-one, without laundry to do, errands to run, phones to answer or offices to go to. In addition to spending this time with our toddlers, parent-toddler programs enable parents to relax and share ideas with each other.

Toddlers are learners. They seem to spend every waking moment trying to figure out how the world works. As they develop new skills like climbing or walking they have to find out just how far each skill will take them and practice it over and over again.

When planning group activities for toddlers and parents, the planner must first keep in mind the characteristics and needs of toddlers. Toddlers are impatient, they dislike waiting. Their attention span is short and they are easily distracted. They have difficulty with transitions and find security in a consistent routine. Toddlers want to be independent, yet they never hesitate to cling to parents when things are uncomfortable. They enjoy dumping toys as well as playing with them.

Being a part of a group experience is difficult for the toddler as he feels he is the center of all he does. Having to sing in a group, do fingerplays, eat at a table or listen to stories with others will require the toddler to become aware of others and learn to give and take. This is where the parent can be most helpful. By being with the child, they can hold and rock, whisper to the child and participate with the teacher, providing the toddler with security, love, and a role model who says, "This is okay to do."

Group activities need to be just that—full of action, involving animation, puppets, flannel stories and large picture books. Any activities which involve parent and child are helpful. Examples such as rowing an imaginary boat together, baiting imaginary hooks and fishing, bouncing balls together or blowing balloons back and forth, enable the parent and toddler to enjoy and interact with each other.

Parents and toddlers can work on the large motor skills by tossing bean bags, yarn balls or nerf balls or by the child walking a balance beam with a parent's helping hand. Crawling through a cardboard tube to an encouraging parent at the end or sliding into a parent's arms is fun and exciting. Foot walks and simple obstacle courses enable parent and child to experience language as well as large motor skills. In planning activities to encourage large motor skills, safety must

be the key. All equipment and activities should be appropriate for the size and not too demanding.

Art activities should be process centered rather than product centered. The toddler enjoys doing and isn't as interested in how it looks as he is in how it's done. Fingerpainting, painting with pudding, roller bottles, brushes, sponges, cars, fold painting and, of course, easel painting all are of interest to the toddler. Markers, tearing paper and pasting, playdoh and licking stickers are also great favorites. Parents are able to interact as they assist their child in doing the activity and supervising the cleanup, offering encouragement along the way. Due to the toddler's short attention span, it is helpful to have two or three different art options available.

Having plenty of toys, games, cars, blocks, small manipulative toys and records available is helpful. Since toddlers have difficulty sharing with others, having plenty of available options helps keep everyone busy, as well as enabling a parent to redirect a child to another area if a conflict occurs.

Sensory tables, buckets or tubs are fun for different experiences. Using different media such as snow, jello, water, soap, rice, sand and soil for measuring, provide opportunities for lots of fun.

The environment needs to be relaxed, familiar and not pushy. If a toddler doesn't want to do something, he shouldn't be forced into it... Often, they will try it when they are ready, without persuasion. If they get messy, we clean them up, realizing that in making the mess some learning has taken place.

Toddlers are busy, but they are also busy learners. As we take the time to share with them, we as parents become learners too!

Reference: Miller, Karen, THINGS TO DO WITH TODDLERS AND TWOS, Tethare Pub. Co., 1984.



WHAT GOES IN A PARENT HANDBOOK?

Good parent/provider communication can prevent hassles. You can lay the foundation for good communication with a well-designed handbook.

Whether you care for six children in your family day care home or 106 in your corporate-sponsored day care, having your practices and policies in writing makes good business sense.

Listed below are topics you might consider including in your parent handbook.

I. General Information About the Organization

- Name of facility
- Location of facility
 - Map
 - Directions
 - Telephone Number
 - Name(s) of owner(s)
- Hours of operation
- Holidays when closed
- Type of service (e.g. day care, nursery school, drop-in)
- Enrollment procedures
- Staff
 - names
 - titles
 - qualifications—education/health/other
- Group size
- Equipment
- Program goals—What do you want to accomplish?
- Program philosophy—Why do you want to accomplish your goals?
- Program objectives—How will you accomplish your goals?
- Discipline policy
- Transportation policy

II. Registration Process

- Tax credit information
- Fee
- Forms
 - child enrollment
 - emergency information
 - health
 - family information
 - field trip permission
- Criteria for admission
- Criteria for withdrawal
 - parent-initiated
 - center-initiated

III. Payment Procedures

- Payment policy
- Late pickup fee
- Absence policy
- Vacation policy
- Additional fees

IV. School-Home Communications

- Parent-teacher conferences

- Newsletters
- Bulletin board

V. Emergency Procedure Policies

- Accident or Injury
- Evacuation
 - fire
 - other
- Contacting parents

VI. Responsibilities of Parent and Provider

- Parent volunteer work
- How parent complaints are handled
- Child care programs
- Responsibility to report child abuse
- Custody of child

VII. Nutrition Policy

- Posting weekly/monthly menus
- Parent agreement to provide food
- Dietary needs
 - Religious
 - Ethnic
 - Medical
 - Personal

VIII. Health and Safety Policies

- Permission for administering medication
- Permission from doctor to return to school
- Sickness procedures
- Daily health check of children
- Record update
 - adult's health records
 - children's health records
 - emergency information
 - immunizations
 - physicals

IX. Clothing

- Change of clothing
- Appropriate for activities
- Marking of clothing
- Seasonal

X. Volunteer Policy

- Qualifications—education/health/other
- Selection
- Orientation
- Responsibilities
- Evaluation

XI. Resources

- Immediate community
- Extended community

XII. Bibliography

- References

NOTE: The Parent Manual should be reviewed periodically and updated where necessary.

Other Suggestions:

1. You may want to indicate which items fall under state licensing regulations for the parent's information.
2. As you write your parent manual, you may wish to contact your licensing consultant for assistance.

"DITTOS? BUT PARENTS WANT DITTOS."

By Linda (Gifford) Ard, Editor
Texas Child Care Quarterly

"I don't use dittos, worksheets, coloring pages, or workbooks, and parents have complained that their children don't bring home any work. When the parents ask what they learned today, the children say, 'We played.' Should I have them color a ditto of a guinea pig so parents will know we have been learning about pets?"

Many caregivers face the same kind of question. They wonder how they can please parents and still provide children with developmentally appropriate activities.

Most early childhood experts agree that coloring pages, worksheets, and workbooks have limited or no value for preschool children.

The problem is that parents are familiar with the use of pencil-and-paper approaches to educating school-age children. Either through assisting in such homework assignments or by seeing graded worksheets, parents are able to tell not only what their children are being taught but also how successful they are in mastering the materials. Parents expect the same feedback from their children's preschool experience. Parents also may think that practice doing workbook pages will help their children be more successful in elementary school.

The truth is that preschool children learn more from concrete experiences than from worksheets. Children need real experiences with objects before they can represent them or think of them in the abstract. For example, children need to experience a real telephone before they can use a wooden block to represent one or before they can have the idea of a telephone in their heads. Instead of circling the one truck missing a tire on a ditto sheet, children learn more by watching (from a safe distance) the center's van tire being changed.

Ditto sheets do not always match pre-school children's experiences. For example, a ditto sheet may require children to name the first letter of various pictured objects when children cannot even identify all the objects. Or children may be told to color pictures of grapes purple when the only grapes children have ever seen or eaten are green.

Furthermore, doing ditto sheets can be tedious and boring to a preschooler. They may give a negative impression of school and actually hinder a child's later success in elementary school.

Another problem is that uninformed parents may perceive a well-equipped early childhood room as only a cute playroom with little furniture, scribbled pictures on the walls, lumber stacked on the shelves, a tub for washing dolls, and toys. Parents may not appreciate the many cognitive and social skills children learn as they play. Instead, parents may think children learn only when they are sitting quietly at desks doing worksheets.

Caregivers have a responsibility to educate parents about sound childhood development practice. Caregivers should realize that parents' requests for ditto sheets are not so much a curriculum suggestion as an effort to find out what their children are doing. When parents understand the basics of early childhood education, they are more supportive of developmentally appropriate activities.

Here are some ideas for educating parents and sharing information with them about their children's progress:

- Give parents a copy of the early childhood quiz. Print answers and a discussion of each question on the back, or ask parents to check with you about the answers when they pick up their children.
- Make posters for each learning center in the room. Briefly describe the center's value and list what children learn there during the week. For example, "Josie built an enclosure with the unit blocks. He used the half-units to divide the area into three separate and equal areas for each of the farm animals. This is a concrete foundation for later learning that one-third plus one-third plus one-third equals one whole."
- Organize pictures of the children's daily activities in a scrapbook. Entitle the book, "What did I do at school today?" Take photographs that illustrate the schedule of activities from arrival to departure. Write captions under each picture and encourage parents to allow children to tell a story about it. Loan the book, using a library check-out system, to the children's parents.
- To show parents creative play and problem-solving efforts (which often cannot be taken home), take pictures of these projects, write a description, or leave them out for parents to see. Some examples of these projects are Desiree's space-center block structure and Sam's arrangement of stuffed animals from the smallest to the largest in the housekeeping center.
- Use newsletters or conferences with parents to share information about what learning is planned for the month.
- Keep a chart of each child's accomplishments for the month. Send the chart home or discuss it with parents.

Curriculum areas offer other ways to share information with parents. Here are some examples:

- On a child's creative artwork, attach a note to parents describing the stage of art the child is in and what the stage tells us about the child.
- Ask parents to dress their two-year-olds in the color blue when you teach or emphasize the color. (Always have a blue scarf, belt, or necklace available for

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those who forget.)

- Send home the words of new songs or fingerplays for toddlers.
- Tape record an individual child talking, telling a story, or singing. Send the tape home for parents to enjoy. This is an especially good activity for toddlers.
- Ask parents to help children catch insects for the science center and encourage parents to reinforce the children's learning. Parents can name insects and point out characteristics such as six legs.
- Ask parents to help their four- and five-year-olds think of words that start with the letter children are learning that week. Matthew, whose dad is a farmer, may suggest the "P" word plow.
- When children cook in class, send home the recipe and a sample of the food, if possible.
- Write experience stories of a field trip and have the children illustrate them for parents to read at home.
- Use bulletin boards and take-home notes to share information about learning activities and projects. Include information about a child's special accomplishment, such as, "I tied my shoe."
- When you finish the week's lesson plan, list the things children will be learning during the week. This can be divided into cognitive, physical and social skills. Add a list of suggestions for expanding this learning at home. Make a handout for each parent or a poster for the door of the bulletin board.
- Parents who ask for ditto sheets or workbooks are really asking for a more involved role in what their children are learning and how they are progressing. The question, then, is not how to please parents but rather how to best inform parents of what children are learning. By knowing the right question, creative caregivers will find many answers.

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- Seefeldt, Carol. "Communicate with Curriculum," *Day Care and Early Education*, Vol. 13, No. 2, Winter 1985.
- "Ideas That Work With Young Children," *Young Children*, November 1984.

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EARLY CHILDHOOD QUIZ

Mark true or false

- ☐ 1. Children learn best by using all their senses.
- ☐ 2. Children should play in the learning centers only after they have finished their lessons.
- ☐ 3. Children learn best by listening and being quiet.
- ☐ 4. Children need to sit in desks to learn their letters and numbers.
- ☐ 5. Children learn more by trying to prepare food by themselves than by watching a caregiver cook.

Suggested answers

- 1. **True.** The best learning activities involve children touching, smelling, hearing, seeing, and tasting.
- 2. **False.** Lessons traditionally are caregiver-directed and should be used only to introduce or review concepts. Learning centers, on the other hand, enable children to learn and solve problems as they play.
- 3. **False.** Children learn best by actively exploring objects in their environments and such activities are often noisy.
- 4. **False.** Children learn letters and numbers better by taking part in physical activities. For example, they can learn letters by lying on the grass to form the first letter of their names and they can learn numbers by walking around a circle of children and touching their heads to count them.
- 5. **True.** Children learn more by doing it themselves—reading a picture recipe, rolling the dough, smelling the spices, and measuring the ingredients.

PLANNING A PARENT MEETING

By Cheri L. Ford
First Grade Transition Room Teacher,
Luce County

Leaving a young child in the care of others is difficult not only for the child, but for the parent as well. Whatever the circumstances, most parents experience some remorse at relinquishing their child into the care of others.

One goal of a quality child care program should be to encourage parents to have a say about their children's daily activities that occur when they are separated from them. Involvement in the child's program results in a closer bond between parent, child and provider, increasing understanding and respect for one another. One way of bringing about this closeness is through parent meetings.

A quality parent meeting begins with extensive planning. The first meeting should be held at a time when a majority of parents are free to attend (usually evenings or weekends). It should be at the facility if at all possible, to afford the parents an opportunity to see firsthand what their children are learning and the environment in which they are learning it. Parents will see what equipment and activities are suitable for their children's ages. Children will feel a sense of pride and connectedness as they see their parents and caregiver meeting together in *THEIR* environment. For additional benefit, try to include the whole family, not just the parents.

An early stage of planning should focus on providing a special experience for the children that will be attending, such as a magician, puppet show or out-of-the ordinary art experience. The children should be in the care of someone familiar to them—preferably an aide or assistant from your program—and additional assistance as necessary.

For your first parent meeting, it's very important to choose a topic that will pique the interest of the parents. One approach might be a hands-on experience such as making materials for learning activities, building a piece of playground equipment or generally improving an interest area with new equipment and activities. The advantage of this kind of meeting is that it is non-threatening and offers immediate gratification for the time and energy spent. It also allows a good deal of get-acquainted time for you and your parents and it creates a relaxed atmosphere. Finally, it provides the parents with an opportunity to improve *THEIR* program, thus increasing their feeling of belonging by providing for their children's away-from-home activities. The parent meeting should be a specific length of time, certainly not to exceed two hours. Having *everything* necessary and ready to go will help to make the best use of the time available. It's a good idea to walk

through the planned activity several days before the meeting to be sure everything is ready.

At some point between the middle and end of the meeting, a break should be provided, for both the parents and the children, perhaps with light and nutritional refreshments. Sharing a few minutes before finishing up assures the children and adults that the end is in sight and allows them a few moments to share in one another's activities.

At the completion of the meeting, each parent should be provided with a short questionnaire for evaluating the meeting. This could be completed at that time or at their convenience to be dropped off later. The evaluation should inquire as to the future interest in parent meetings, including format (lecture, discussion, etc.) and topics of interest.

Holding a successful parent meeting has both short- and long term benefits. It provides an opportunity for parents and children to share the program. It gives parents time to explore an environment which is age-appropriate and developmentally sound for their children. And it allows them a way to have some control over the activities in which their children participate while they are away. It also begins to lay the groundwork for future parent involvement in children's education. This may be only the beginning of a long and enjoyable road of parent involvement for you and the families in your program.



A Sample Parent Survey

Suggestion — One Lansing Center held a contest to inspire parents to return a survey. They offered one free day of child care to the winner. Response was a 90% return.

We would like to get to know you better and plan activities for you and your family. Will you share your ideas by answering the following?

What types of meetings would you be interested in attending?

☐ informal social gathering ☐ guest speaker/lecture ☐ workshop

Would you attend? ☐ yes ☐ no if topic is of interest ☐

What day of the week is best?

☐ Monday ☐ Wednesday ☐ Friday ☐ Sunday
☐ Tuesday ☐ Thursday ☐ Saturday

What is the best time for you to meet?

Lunch 11-1 ☐ Other time ☐ _____
Dinner 5-7 ☐

Will you need child care? yes ☐ no ☐

If so, how old are your children?

Will you need transportation? yes ☐ no ☐

If yes, what location will you be departing from?

What is the hardest thing about being a parent?

What topics would most interest you or would be most beneficial to you?

☐ positive parenting ☐ family support ☐ managing stress
☐ activities to do with children ☐ children with special needs
☐ child development ☐ discipline ☐ safety
☐ controlling communicable diseases ☐ other

Of all the topics you have checked or written down, which do you consider the most important. Rank in numerical order of most important.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Do you have specialized knowledge in any of the above areas?

Would you be interested in:

☐ facilitating ☐ notifying parents
☐ greeting parents ☐ providing refreshments _____
☐ speaking on a topic ☐ organizing a workshop
☐ other (specify below) ☐ conducting icebreakers

☐ telephone number and best time to be contacted _____

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Look for the results of this survey and upcoming parent meetings.

SIXTY-FIVE CHILDREN AND NO PLACE TO GO

*By Ann Hill, Director
Great Beginning Christian Child Care Center,
Saginaw County*

Two and one half years ago our center had a unique experience that illustrated the valuable resource that parents can be.

The church board that had sponsored our center for almost eight years suddenly decided to discontinue it within two months. After recovering from the initial shock of this decision, I concluded that it was very important for this Christian child care program to continue. In order for this to happen I needed the support of staff and parents.

The staff supported the decision to relocate the center and they were willing to stay with the program. We held a meeting to see if the parents wanted the program continued. An overwhelming number of parents were present for the meeting—about 95 percent.

The steering committee which was formed at this meeting provided the backbone of our relocation project. Parents with professional skills, talents, resources and abilities donated their time and the services for which we had no money to pay. The steering committee was composed of a realtor, a C.P.A., an attorney, a financial operations consultant, two professional secretaries, a construction consultant and a person with computer and business skills.

A difficult task lay before us: to relocate a center for 65 children in less than three months. (The church had extended our moving date). The most challenging task was finding a relocation site, larger than what we had, with no money. The steering committee worked together as a team, each member with specific responsibilities. The attorney filed for our articles of incorporation; the realtor searched for the new site; the C.P.A. applied for our tax exempt status and wrote our bylaws; the financial consultant developed a start-up budget for the center; the secretary set up fund-raising projects for parents to work on and another member contacted local businesses for donations of money and needed equipment. Once we selected the facility, the construction consultant oversaw the building projects that were needed.

At one of our parent meetings, over 50 parents signed up to assist wherever needed. Many listed specific skills such as electrical work, plumbing, landscaping, painting and wallpapering. Both staff and parents



donated their time and energies, working evenings and weekend to get the new location ready.

We were able to keep some of our equipment from the former center since it had been donated by the parents, earned through fund-raising projects, or purchased by the teachers. We distributed a list of needed equipment to all parents. Many of them bought or built equipment and donated money to purchase other items.

The center closed on a Friday and reopened at a new location on Monday. Parents brought their pick-up trucks and donated their time to move the center. Everything was moved in about four hours. Some parents even came back on Saturday to help unpack and set things up.

Working together as a team cemented our bonds as providers and parents. Accomplishing the goal of relocation was satisfying and rewarding for all of us and beneficial for the children.

RESOURCES—PARENT INVOLVEMENT

"Working with Working Families," Margaret King, Texas Child Care Quarterly, Fall, 1989.

Home, School and Community Relations: A Guide to Working with Parents, Carol Gestwicki, Delmar Publishers, Inc.

"Parent Involvement in Early Childhood Education," A.S. Honig, N.A.E.Y.C.

"Teacher-Parent Relationships," J.G. Stone, 1987, N.A.E.Y.C.

"How to Implement an Active Parent Component in a Child Care Program" — Send self-addressed envelope to: Preschool Publications, Inc., Department 89J, Box 1851, Garden City, N.Y. 11530-0816.

The following articles on parent-provider relations were published by: Child Care Information Exchange, P.O. Box 2890, Redmond, Washington 98073. \$35/year, 6 issues.

"All Parents Are Not Alike: Focusing on the Developmental Needs of Parents." 10/89.

"Lessons in Parent Communication: Insights from the Parent Co-op Model." 4/89.

"Face-to-Face Communication: Understanding and Strengthening the Partnership." 3/88.

"Separation Anxiety: How to Ask a Family to Leave." 1/88.

"Engaging Parents in Solving Problems: A Strategy for Enhancing Self-Esteem." 11/87.

"Making the Most of Parent Conferences." 7/86.

Spring Conference For Parents and Teachers May 4-5, 1990

Michigan Council of Cooperative Nurseries,
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Michigan State University
The Kellogg Center for
Continuing Education

Keynote Speaker — Dr. Alice Honig

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Please send articles for consideration in future issues to:

Better Homes and Centers
Div. of Child Day Care Licensing
Ingham County Dept. of Social Services
5303 S. Cedar St.
Lansing, Michigan 48911



PROVIDER'S CORNER

The Providers Corner will return with the next issue of Better Homes & Centers. We omitted it this time because as you might have noticed, providers have written most of this issue.

Everybody Comes From A Family: Nurturing Through the Life Cycle April 23-24, 1990

14th Annual Conference
Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health

University of Michigan Campus

Featuring:

Barbara Boman — Erickson Institute

Erna Furman — Cleveland Center for Research and Child Development

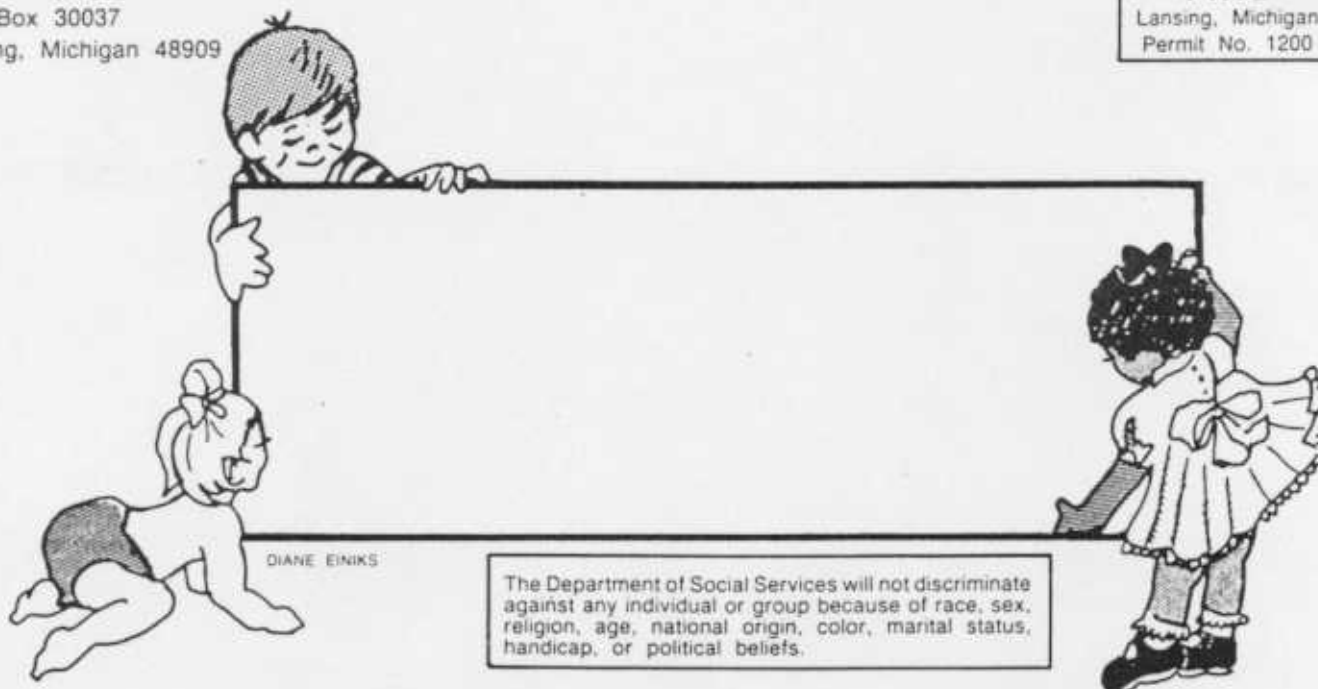
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